

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAY 7, 2009

**HWTF'S NEW TRU TV CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS RISING GRASSROOTS
TOBACCO-FREE MOVEMENT ACROSS NORTH CAROLINA**

Tobacco.Reality.Unfiltered. (TRU) teen advocacy groups help prevent teen tobacco use

(Raleigh, NC) — This week, the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) kicks off a new TV campaign highlighting the efforts of TRU groups comprised of teen advocates across the state who are helping prevent teen tobacco use. The campaign launches statewide and is designed to encourage even more NC youth to join the grassroots movement.

Tobacco.Reality.Unfiltered. (TRU) is HWTF's statewide initiative to prevent tobacco use among teens. HWTF grantees across the state have founded more than 155 TRU groups. The groups are made up of teen advocates who are working to prevent teen tobacco use in their communities and schools. TRU groups conduct peer-to-peer tobacco prevention education, promote the adoption of tobacco-free policies in their communities, encourage cessation among their peers who smoke and engage in local and statewide activities to promote a tobacco-free lifestyle.

"We are proud of our HWTF grantees and the TRU groups they have fostered across North Carolina," said Vandana Shah, HWTF's executive director. "These teens are helping to build North Carolina's first tobacco-free generation. They are the force behind the TRU movement – pushing their peers to make a commitment to be tobacco-free, holding countless events to spread the TRU message and recruiting their peers to join the movement."

The 2009 campaign's first television spot features a Vance County TRU group educating local elementary school students about the dangers of tobacco use. As part of their youth education work, the group regularly presents to fifth graders throughout the school district, in addition to leading efforts in their own schools.

"Working with TRU over the past three years has reinforced my goal to be an educator," said Pherin Gregory, a senior at Northern Vance High School and an active TRU member who is featured in the ad. "I'm thankful that, together with other TRU teens across the state, we really make a difference."

Since the September 2007 launch of the TRU Recruitment Campaign, nearly 10,000 NC teens have pledged to be tobacco free at the TRU Web site (www.realityunfiltered.com). The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill identified that HWTF's teen tobacco prevention program has contributed to major successes in North Carolina's effort to combat tobacco use. Smoking rates among NC teens are at an all-time low. High school and middle school smoking rates continue to decline, and 34,000 fewer teens are smoking since 2003.

To view the new TV ad, please visit <http://www.realityunfiltered.com/TRUtv.aspx>. The next spot, set to air in the fall, will feature a TRU group in Orange County as they pick up cigarette butts on the grounds of Chapel Hill High School on Earth Day.

ABOUT THE NC HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund makes North Carolina stronger, both physically and economically, by funding programs that promote preventive health. Created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTF has invested \$199 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$102 million to fund prescription drug assistance programs. For more information, please visit www.HealthWellNC.com.